

SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE INFORMATION OFFICE OF
THE ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA IN WASHINGTON, DC

**SEPTEMBER 13, 2011****FOREIGN RELATIONS****Prince Saud leads delegations to meetings of GCC, Arab Peace Initiative**

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal led the Kingdom's delegation to the 120th session of the Ministerial Council of GCC Foreign Ministers, which was held in Jeddah on September 11. The participants included the foreign ministers of Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, the UAE, Oman, Morocco and Jordan. During the meeting, the Ministerial Council reaffirmed its commitment to the stability and security of Bahrain and expressed support for the measures taken by its government. The foreign ministers welcomed the elections that are scheduled in Bahrain for later this month, which will contribute to the reform process, as well as the launching of the National Consensus Dialogue and the formation of an independent fact-finding commission.

After the session concluded, a press release outlining the ministers' positions on a variety of topics was issued. These topics included Arab cooperation, the environment, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, counterterrorism, relations with Iran, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the situations in Yemen, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia. Regarding the Palestinian issue, the Council expressed support for the ongoing efforts to convince members of the United Nations to recognize a Palestinian state based on the borders before June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Noting developments in Syria, the ministers demanded an end to attacks against civilians and called for the implementation of reforms that will achieve security and stability in that country. The Council also expressed concern about the deterioration of the situation in Yemen. Finally, the Council reiterated its support for Libya's Transitional National Council and welcomed the realization of the will of the Libyan people.

On September 12, Prince Saud headed the Kingdom's delegation to the ministerial meeting of the Arab Peace Initiative Committee in Cairo.

SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS**Ambassador Al-Jubeir releases statement on 9/11 anniversary**

Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel A. Al-Jubeir issued a statement on September 11: "Today marks the 10th anniversary of the terrible crime

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committed in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania in which almost 3,000 innocent people were killed in an evil act condemned and abhorred by all religions and cultures," he said. "Over the past ten years, the world has come together to fight the scourge of terrorism with determination and resolve in order to, God-willing, deny terrorists the ability to inflict harm on the innocent. Today, we renew our condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims and the people of the United States." Ambassador Al-Jubeir also attended a memorial ceremony at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, during which U.S. President Barack Obama delivered a speech.

Meanwhile, the Jeddah-based Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) issued its own statement today reiterating its condemnation of terrorism. "On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the OIC joins the international community in remembering the ugliness and cowardice of this terrorist act and the tragic loss of thousands of innocent human lives," it said. The statement added: "The Organization of Islamic Cooperation avails itself of this occasion to reaffirm its firm position in condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as terrorism is a hateful disease that seeks to destroy the intrinsic value of man." The OIC confirmed its readiness to cooperate in any credible initiative aimed at addressing the root causes of terrorism and providing a more secure world for future generations.

ECONOMY

Saudi Arabia ranks 17th in international competitiveness

Saudi Arabia has risen to the 17th position in the World Economic Forum's 2011 ranking of international competitiveness, according to a report issued in Geneva on September 7. The Global Competitiveness Report evaluated key economic indicators, including capital strength, growth rate, labor market, infrastructure and education levels, of 142 countries to assess their business environments. Last year, the Kingdom was ranked 21st. "This is a testament to the initiatives King Abdullah has undertaken to ensure that Saudi Arabia is a leader in the global economy," said Ambassador Al-Jubeir. "It is clear that King Abdullah's commitment to diversify and privatize the Saudi economy is working."

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SEPTEMBER 20, 2011

COUNTERTERRORISM

Agreement to establish U.N. Center for Combating Terrorism signed

An agreement was signed at United Nations headquarters in New York on September 19 for the establishment of the U.N. Center for Combating Terrorism, an initiative proposed by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz at the International Conference for Combating Terrorism in Riyadh in 2005. The agreement was signed by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon at the 66th session of the U.N. General Assembly. Saudi Arabia will contribute \$10 million during the next three years to set up the anti-terrorism center, while working to foster international counterterrorism cooperation and build capacity.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the U.N. Secretary General stated, "The center will go a long way in countering terrorism around the world. What I see here today is the start of a new era in counterterrorism cooperation. States recognize that they cannot go it alone." Afterward, Prince Saud and Secretary General Ban attended an international symposium on ways to fight terrorism through international cooperation. Addressing the gathering, Prince Saud said, "Terrorism has no religion. There are more than 1.5 billion Muslims in different parts of the world who represent an age-old culture that calls for peace, cooperation and tolerance."

Special Criminal Court resumes hearings for 41 suspected terrorists

The Special Criminal Court held a session on September 19 for the prosecution of 41 suspected terrorists. The defendants, including 38 Saudis, 1 Qatari, 1 Yemeni and 1 Afghan, are accused of establishing a terrorist cell inside the Kingdom; planning terrorist operations against U.S. troops in Qatar and Kuwait; financing fighters in Iraq and Afghanistan; recruiting for Al-Qaeda in Iraq; and creating border crossing points to smuggle men, money and weaponry from Saudi Arabia into Iraq. The session was attended by nine of the accused men, as well as a representative from the Human Rights Commission and media correspondents.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Arab League Council holds 136th session

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal led the Kingdom's delegation to the 136th session of the Arab League Council in Cairo on September 13. The deliberations

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focused on Arab political, security, economic and legal issues; particularly the Palestinian cause. In a statement issued afterward, the Council stressed the importance of maintaining good relations between the Arab world and Iran. It also addressed the dangerous situation in Syria, calling upon the Syrian leadership to end the bloodshed immediately. The Council underscored the importance of staging a national dialogue that includes opposition forces and implementing political reform. Separate meetings of the Arab Ministerial Committee on Somalia and the Arab Ministerial Committee on Sudan also met.

EDUCATION

4,000 new school buildings planned

The Ministry of Education announced plans to construct 4,000 new school buildings in various parts of the Kingdom at a cost of SR 32 billion [\$8.53 billion] as part of its efforts to modernize Saudi educational facilities. "We have already completed 600 new school buildings this year at a cost of SR 9 billion," said Muhammad Al-Dakhini, a Ministry spokesman. There are more than 33,000 primary, intermediate and secondary schools across the Kingdom, according to the Education Ministry. Al-Dakhini noted that 1,200 schools have already been renovated this year.

FOREIGN AID

Saudi ambassador delivers financial assistance to Guinea

Saudi Ambassador to Guinea Amjad bin Hussain Al-Badawi delivered \$500,000 to government officials in Conakry on September 15, in line with the Kingdom's pledge to assist Guinea in the evacuation of its citizens from Libya. During the handover ceremony, the Guinean officials praised Saudi Arabia for its generous humanitarian assistance to countries around the world.

EMBASSY ACTIVITIES

9/11 first responders present plaque to ambassador

Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel A. Al-Jubeir met with first responders on September 18 in New York on the 10th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks. During the meeting, the firefighters presented Ambassador Al-Jubeir with a plaque in recognition of his service "to the September 11th 2001 World Trade Center first responders."

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SEPTEMBER 27, 2011

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Saudi Foreign Minister calls for Palestinian statehood at the U.N.

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal led the Kingdom's delegation to the opening of the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on September 21, a day after meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

On September 26, the Foreign Minister issued a statement to the General Assembly in which he stressed the critical importance of ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. "The Arab-Israeli conflict still predominates and overshadows all issues of the Middle East. No other regional conflict is more influential upon world peace," he said. Prince Saud highlighted the efforts by the Kingdom to secure peace in the region. "The Arab states have clearly expressed, through the Arab Peace Initiative launched by Saudi Arabia and adopted by the Beirut Arab Summit in 2004, their commitment to achieving just and comprehensive peace based on the rules of international law," he said. "However, we were not met by any reciprocal commitment from Israel." Prince Saud concluded, "As a result of the continued Israeli intransigence and disruption of the peace process, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls upon all Member States of the U N to recognize the State of Palestine on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to grant it full membership in the United Nations."

SAUDI ARABIA-U.S. RELATIONS

White House welcomes expansion of Saudi women's political rights

In an a statement issued on September 25, the White House welcomed the announcement of King Abdullah that Saudi women will be appointed to the Majlis Al-Shoura (Consultative Council) and will be allowed to participate in future municipal elections. "We welcome Saudi King Abdullah's announcement today that women will serve as full members of the Shoura Council in the next session, and will have the right to participate in future elections," said the White House. It added, "These reforms recognize the significant contributions women in Saudi Arabia make to their society and will offer them new ways to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and communities." King Abdullah's announcement has been met with praise from governments around the world.

EMBASSY ACTIVITIES

Saudi Embassy Celebrates National Day

Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel Al-Jubeir hosted a reception on September 23 celebrating the 79th (81st according to the Hijra calendar)

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anniversary of the founding of the modern Saudi state in 1932 by King Abdulaziz Al-Saud. Guests included U.S. government officials, members of Congress and the diplomatic corps, embassy staff and members of the Saudi community in Washington.

ISLAM

Prince Nayef opens Takfeer conference in Madinah

On September 20 in Madinah, Second Deputy Prime Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz commenced the International Conference on the Takfeer Phenomenon: Its Causes, Effects and Treatment. Following the three-day conference, scholars presented recommendations on how to eliminate the phenomenon of people accusing others of being infidels. In a speech delivered on his behalf by Prince Nayef, King Abdullah warned against the dangers of extremism, pointing out that the Islamic religion forbids inciting fanaticism or killing innocent people. Islam warns against accusing others of being infidels," he said. "We have suffered from the dangers of extremism and deviated thought, which have developed into [terrorist attacks]. We should continue to confront this deviation strongly and firmly." King Abdullah lamented the effects of extremist groups on the Kingdom, noting, "Some of our sons have been deviated by groups that have ill-will against this country." However, he insisted, "Our Muslim society rejects deviant thoughts and extremist methods."

FOREIGN AID

Saudi food assistance delivered to Algeria

Saudi Ambassador to Algeria Sami bin Abdullah Al-Saleh received a consignment of 206 tons of dates in Algiers on September 20, as part of the Kingdom's assistance to Algeria in cooperation with the World Food Program (WFP). The dates were handed over to the Director of the WFP's Executive Office in Algiers, Dr. Osama Osman, at a special ceremony. Addressing the gathering, Ambassador Al-Saleh expressed the Kingdom's commitment to supporting the humanitarian activities of the WFP around the world.

Saudi Campaign sends food baskets to Gaza

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' Campaign for the Relief of the Palestinian People in Gaza recently dispatched a second and a third relief convoy to deliver food to the people of Gaza. The delivery of \$3 million worth of food aid was part of the urgent relief program initiated by King Abdullah to alleviate the current humanitarian crisis. The Campaign is delivering 56,000 baskets of food to needy families in cooperation with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency .

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Saudi Arabia Inaugurates First Solar Power Plant

WASHINGTON, October 5, 2011— Saudi Arabia inaugurated its first solar power plant on October 1 as it continues to diversify its energy sources. The 500-kilowatt plant, located on Farasan Island, will save the equivalent of transferring 28,000 barrels of diesel fuel to the island annually.

The plant was constructed by the Saudi Electricity Company (SEC) and Showa Shell Sekiyu K.K., a Japanese energy company partly owned by the Saudi Arabian Oil Company. This is one of the many initiatives led by SEC to introduce clean energy throughout the Kingdom.

"Saudi Arabia is committed to building and refining alternative energy solutions," said Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir. "This program is one large step that will benefit the environment and the Saudi people."

The Kingdom is a prime location to harness solar energy because of its year-round sunshine. The sun in Saudi Arabia emits about 7,000 watts of energy per square meter over an average of 12 hours every day.

In February 2010, the Saudi government, in coordination with the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, began building the first solar-powered water desalination plant.

For more information on Saudi Arabia, please visit www.saudiembassy.net and follow the Embassy on Twitter (@SaudiEmbassyUSA) or on the Embassy YouTube page.

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Saudi King Advances Political Rights for Women

WASHINGTON, September 25, 2011 – The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz announced today that Saudi women will be allowed to vote in the third municipal elections. Addressing the opening session of the annual Majlis Al-Shura (Consultative Council) meeting, King Abdullah also announced that women will be appointed to the Council beginning in the next session.

“Since we reject to marginalize the role of women in the Saudi society, in every field of works, according to the (Islamic) Shariah guidelines, and after consultations with many of our religious scholars, including members the Council of Senior *Ulema* [religious scholars], who have expressed the preference for this orientation, and supported this trend, we have decided the following,” King Abdullah stated.

“First, the participation of women in the Majlis Al-Shura as members from next session in accordance with the Shariah guidelines,” said King Abdullah. “Second, as of the next session, women will have the right to nominate themselves for membership of Municipal Councils, and also have the right to participate in the nomination of candidates with the Islamic guidelines.”

King Abdullah is committed to continued advancements and developments in women’s education and employment and political participation. In 2005, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed a number of women in a variety of jobs in the political, economic, women’s rights and computer departments. Most recently, the first female deputy minister, Nourah Al-Fayez, was appointed to Deputy Minister of Education for Women’s Education.

Saudi Arabia held its first municipal elections in 2005. The second elections for seats on municipal councils will be held on September 29.

For more information on Saudi Arabia, please visit www.saudiembassy.net and follow the Embassy on Twitter (@SaudiEmbassyUSA) or on the Embassy YouTube page.

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SAUDI ARABIA CELEBRATES NATIONAL DAY

WASHINGTON, September 23, 2011 -- Today, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia celebrates its 81st (according to the Hijra calendar) anniversary of the founding of the Saudi state in 1932 by King Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

"Saudi Arabia has grown to become a full contributor to the global community, promoting national goals of diplomacy, tolerance and innovation," said Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir. "As we look ahead to a bright future, we continue to invest in the citizens of Saudi Arabia who will be the ones to strengthen the place of our nation in the world."

This occasion is celebrated throughout the Kingdom and by Saudi Embassies and missions throughout the world.

For more information on Saudi National Day, please visit www.saudiembassy.net and follow the Embassy on Twitter (@SaudiEmbassyUSA) or on the Embassy YouTube page.

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